

Chapter 2

Three days later, I finally walked out of the hospital.

Aimlessly, I wandered down the street until a sudden force shoved me to the ground. Startled, I turned to see Mike's furious glare.

"Where have you been these three days? Why didn't you answer your phone? Because of you, Lucy attended the banquet without a necklace and became a laughingstock. How dare you show your face here?"

I clutched my aching stomach, feeling the raw sting on my arm where the gravel had scraped the skin. Cold sweat broke out all over me.

Noticing me clutching my abdomen, a flicker of regret passed through Mike's eyes. He stepped closer as if to help me up.

I pushed his hand away, fighting back the pain. "Don't touch me."

Seeing the pallor of my face and the sweat beading on my forehead, he exhaled deeply, forcing himself to speak with restraint.

"Lucy hasn't been back in three years. This banquet was filled with old friends. What will people think of her now because of you?"

Before I could respond, Lucy appeared from behind him, her smile faint yet mocking as she approached. Pretending concern, she bent slightly as if to help me up.

"Ava, don't be angry at Mike. He's just upset for my sake." Her voice was syrupy sweet as she turned to Mike, playfully poking his head.

"Mike, even if you're standing up for me, you can't really lay a hand on Ava. She's still carrying your child."

His anger reignited at her words. Ignoring me, he snatched my bag from the ground, his sharp words cutting into me like knives. "Lucy is slender, young, and elegant—someone who truly deserves this necklace." He rummaged through the bag, pulling out the item he sought.

"Look at you now. Ugly and sloppy. Rather than making this necklace look bad, you might as well give it to her."

Once he found the necklace, he approached Lucy with care, carefully placing it around her neck.

My vision blurred with tears as I watched him, memories clawing their way back to the surface. I remembered how, when I first became pregnant, he'd touched my belly with cautious reverence.

He had promised to learn how to cook meals for expectant mothers, urging me to gain weight, to grow strong, so we could have a healthy baby.

Lucy's exaggerated gasp pulled me back to the present.

"Mike, this is the most beautiful necklace I've ever seen," she said, her voice dripping with delight.

His expression softened as he gazed at her. "If you like it, it's yours."

Lucy hesitated theatrically, stealing a glance at me. "But... Ava seems reluctant to part with it."

Mike's eyes turned cold as they landed on me. "She looks like this now—it is a waste on her. Don't worry about her. You keep it. I'll get you something even better next time."

The two walked off arm in arm, their closeness making it seem like they were the ones truly engaged.

I didn't look back. I retrieved my bag from the ground, pulled out my phone, and called for a car.

But as I swiped at the screen, a post in my feed caught my eye. My finger had slipped, unintentionally opening it.

In the post, Lucy was seated in the passenger seat, my necklace shining around her neck. Mike's profile was unmistakable beside her.

The caption read: "The one who loves me most [heart emoji]."

Without thinking, I tapped the like button.

Tears blurred the screen, distorting the image, as they rolled unchecked down my face.